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UNCLAS VALLETTA 000062

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SUBJECT: MALTA: 2008 END USE MONITORING REPORT

REF: STATE 127211

¶1. The two eighty-seven foot "Protector" class patrol boats (P51 and P52) provided to the Armed Forces of Malta in November 2002 and July 2004 continue to be the backbone of the Maritime Squadron. To date, the boats have been kept in top condition by well-trained crews and an extensive supply of spare parts that came with the original FMS cases.

¶2. The primary roles of the patrol boats are Search and Rescue (SAR), Migrant Interdiction Operations, Fisheries Protection and Maritime Law Enforcement. By the Armed Forces of Malta's (AFM) own estimate, both craft have delivered exceptional levels of reliability. In 2008, the two vessels were underway for over 1900 hours for operations and training. They have patrolled regularly at ranges in excess of 150 nautical miles from the coast and for periods of 96 hours continuously underway, and have proven exceptionally seaworthy in challenging weather conditions.

¶3. The "Protector" class boats have made noteworthy contributions in addressing Malta's challenge of irregular migration at sea. Year-round, the patrol boats are used for migrant search and rescue missions as well as for migrant patrols in the waters between Malta and Libya. A notable rescue occurred in December 2008 when P52 was tasked with assisting a migrant craft reported in distress 45 miles south of Malta. The operation resulted in the rescue of 139 persons, including infants and pregnant women, the largest rescue by a craft of this class to date.

¶4. The high availability levels of the patrol boats is due in part to the close relationship the AFM maintains with the U.S. boat Manufacturer CHAND LLC, who have provided responsive logistical support and affordable parts, allowing most support maintenance to be done in-house, with more extensive repair items completed by local service providers in Malta.

BORDONARO